



AQUATIC LANDS HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN

As steward of more than 2.6 million acres of state-owned aquatic lands, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) ensures that the people of Washington benefit from the use of aquatic lands while also ensuring environmental protection of the state's aquatic resources.

DNR believes the most effective way to provide sustainable stewardship of our aquatic lands into the future is to develop and implement a habitat conservation plan (HCP).

In September 2012, DNR submitted a draft of the Aquatic Lands HCP to the two federal "Services" agencies responsible for approving the plan: the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries).

In the fall of 2013, the draft HCP and accompanying Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will go out for public review. Then, DNR will apply to the services for Section 10 ("incidental take") permits.

What is an HCP?

A habitat conservation plan defines how lands are managed and the measures used to ensure long-term, landscape-based protection of federally listed and non-listed species considered at risk of extinction. The plan is a formalized contract between the land manager (DNR) and the federal services agencies charged with protecting endangered and threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

Under the Aquatic Lands HCP, DNR will commit to strategies that protect and enhance habitats that support at-risk species. The plan emphasizes habitat conservation and recovery, and ecosystem health as the basis for strong long-term management. The aquatic HCP will guide how and where uses of state-owned aquatic lands will occur.

Why is DNR pursuing an HCP for state-owned aquatic lands?

The population of Washington State continues to grow, resulting in increased pressure on our aquatic ecosystems. Balancing public benefit and environmental preservation is proving to be a difficult task.

An aquatic lands HCP will help DNR protect sensitive, threatened, and endangered species that are native to Washington State and depend on aquatic habitat. An aquatic lands HCP will also ensure that activities authorized by DNR, such as leasing for marinas and aquaculture, can continue while avoiding and minimizing impacts to endangered species. By committing to the conservation strategies in the aquatic HCP, DNR and entities that lease state-owned aquatic lands will receive federal assurances of compliance with the ESA.

What species will the HCP protect?

The draft Aquatic HCP proposes a number of guidelines to help protect animals that rely on aquatic lands for all or a significant portion of their lives. The draft plan proposes to include coverage for 29 at-risk species.

What uses will the HCP address?

The Aquatic HCP will include specific measures to address impacts from three types of activities:

- **Overwater structures** (boat ramps, launches, docks and wharves; floating homes; mooring buoys; nearshore buildings; rafts and floats; marinas; shipyards, and terminals.)
- **Log booms** (large rafts of logs that are stored in the water)
- **Shellfish aquaculture** (clam, oyster and geoduck culture methods)

For more information about the Aquatic Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

Visit: www.dnr.wa.gov/aquatichcp

Or

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